

Exceptional Circumstances Procedure

How will I be supported to succeed?

How do I carry on if things don't go plan?

At Staffordshire University we understand that students may experience difficulties at some point in their studies, due to an illness or personal events. However, we know that students who stay on track and complete their course on time, with their original course group are more likely to succeed. Being a successful graduate means that you are able to deal with day to day problems and make plans to overcome them. Therefore, good time management and planning are essential to meet deadlines. Being able to do this makes you work-ready.

Please talk to someone if you think things aren't going right and we will look to explain what's happening and work with you to sort things out. Just talk to us as soon as you can. This could be with your Academic Mentor or member of your Course Team.

To help you do this, we offer a range of support. So please tell us about your problems as early as you can so that we can support you to submit your best work on time.

If your difficulties mean that you cannot carry on with your studies for a period of time, you may need to take a [break in studies](#).

Where can I go for support?

If you are experiencing difficulties, in the first instance, please talk to your Academic Mentor who will support you to help you stay on track. Your Academic Mentor will guide you to others who can help you through your difficulty.

There are other people with whom you can discuss your personal circumstances such as the Student Support and Experience Team Student-Support@staffs.ac.uk, the [Students' Union Student Advice Team](#). If you're studying at a partner, your institution will have their own support teams. We are all here to help you succeed first time on time.

What if I've done everything I can and I've still got an issue?

You must try your best to complete your work. It is always better to submit first time, on time and we expect you to plan responsibly so that you can do this. In some exceptional circumstances, we know that you may not be able to overcome your difficulty even though you have talked to those who can offer help. In such cases, a claim for exceptional circumstances can be made. If you are repeating a Level and need to apply, speak to your Course Leader too. See the "Other Things" section for more information.

What if I am studying at

If you are studying on a Staffordshire University course at a college or other provider in the UK, this procedure applies.

another college or provider?

If you are studying a Staffordshire University course at a college or another provider outside of the UK, the above rules and timescales will still apply but the decision on your Exceptional Circumstances will be made where you are studying. You may also be asked to complete a form (rather than an online application).

However, the decisions which we reach will be in line with those reached for students studying on campus. If you wish to appeal, you can do so as outlined below.

What are exceptional circumstances?

What day to day problems are not considered exceptional?

You should be able to deal with most day-to-day difficulties and work through minor illness or life's problems. Because this is expected of you in the world of work, we expect it of you during your course. Below are only some of the circumstances **we do not consider** to be exceptional:

Health

- Minor illness such as a cough or cold
- Routine medical appointments
- Ongoing medical conditions where there is no change in your condition. For example, a condition for which you already have a Learning Support Statement.

Life Events (over which you have control)

- Moving house
- Holidays
- Weddings
- Change of employment where this is within your control

Personal Errors

- Getting assessment information wrong
- Not backing up your work

What are exceptional circumstances?

Here are some examples of difficulties that you may not be able to overcome or may severely impact on your performance:

Health

- A sudden and serious illness or injury
- A significant worsening of an existing illness

Life Event

- Death of a close friend or family member
- Victim of crime

Personal

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- Major disruption to travel on the day of an assessment requiring your attendance, which you could not have done anything about.

If you experience something not included above, you can always contact the University's [support services](#), or local support team.

Making a claim

How do I make a claim for exceptional circumstances?

You can make a claim online, by logging into [e:vision](#) and going to My Modules and Assessment. **You will need to select every assessment task you want to claim for, not just every module.**

If you are unsure how or are unable to do this, you can talk to your Personal Tutor or visit [Student Connect](#). You can also get independent advice and guidance via the [Students' Union Student Advice Team](#).

If you would like your circumstances to be considered, you must submit your claim. Informing your Tutor or Course Leader is not enough.

You should only make a claim if there is nothing you can do to overcome your circumstances. For this reason, claims made more than four weeks before the assessment will not be considered.

Claims can be submitted up to two weeks after the assessment date (excluding bank holidays and university closures, for example Christmas closure). Any claims submitted after that time will not be considered.

What evidence do I need?

You need to provide evidence of the exceptional situation and how this is preventing you from completing your work to the best of your ability. We expect you to be honest in how you explain and evidence your circumstances, if you are found to have made a false statement or provided false evidence, this will be considered in accordance with the Academic Conduct Procedure ([link](#)).

Health

- Evidence from a medical practitioner who is treating you. This must confirm that you were ill and seen around the time of your assessment.

Life Event

- Evidence of the bereavement and your relationship with the deceased.
 - If you are a victim of crime, you will need to provide a police report. An incident number alone is not enough as the police will not discuss your case with us.
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Personal

- If you have experienced unexpected travel disruption you can evidence this through traffic, news or weather reports. You cannot claim for pre-published travel disruption as this is something you could have planned for.

If your circumstance is not included above, you can always speak to a [Student Support & Experience \(Money & Guidance\) team](#) about what evidence is needed.

What happens next?

All claims are confidential. We will only share details with those staff who are deciding on your claim.

You should try to submit evidence with your claim. However, if you are unable to do this, please submit the evidence within two weeks (excluding bank holidays). Without evidence we are unable to consider your claim.

We understand that this can be a difficult time and, once we have all of your evidence, we will normally make a decision on your claim within two weeks (excluding bank holidays and university closures for example Christmas closure).

When your claim has been considered we will let you know by email whether or not your claim has been successful. The Award Board and Course Leader will be informed of the decision.

What will an Award Board do with the claim outcome?

We believe it is best for you to submit your work first time, on time. If we feel that there was something you could have done to avoid your circumstances, your claim will be rejected and standard regulations will apply.

However, if we agree that there was a circumstance which you could not have done anything about, an Award Board will apply one of the following outcomes:

- a) If you have submitted your work within one week of the deadline, and its accepted, it will be marked and counted as if it had been submitted on time.
- b) If you have failed or were unable to submit your work, the Award Board may offer you a resit opportunity to submit your work, if one is available.

If the Award Board can condone your module mark, they may do that instead.

Exceptional Circumstances claims can help an Award Board to understand that you have experienced circumstances which have prevented you from engaging with your studies. For example, the

Award Board may consider if you can be given a repeat year based on your level of engagement.

For more information on condonement or progression decisions, please see the [Academic Regulations](#) - What if things don't go to plan?

How many opportunities to submit will I have?

All students have the same number of opportunities to submit an assessment. The number of opportunities that are available can be found in the "What if I fail a module?" section of the Academic Regulations. An upheld Exceptional Circumstances claim will not change the number of assessment opportunities that a student can have.

Appeal

What if I don't agree with the decision?

You can submit an appeal to regulations@staffs.ac.uk within two weeks (excluding bank holidays and university closures for example Christmas closure) of the date of your emailed decision.

There are three reasons why you can appeal:

- a) The Exceptional Circumstance Procedure was not followed properly.
- b) The decision reached was unreasonable in view of all of the circumstances.
- c) You have new evidence which you were unable to provide earlier in the process, for valid reasons.

Eligible appeals will be considered by a senior manager in your School who will review the appeal. You will receive your decision by e-mail, normally within three weeks, excluding University closures and bank holidays.

What if I don't agree with the appeal decision?

If you disagree with the appeal decision, you have the right to make a complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) within one year of the decision. You can find out more by clicking [here](#).

Other Things

What if I'm repeating some of my studies?

Sometimes students repeat parts of their studies. That could be because they've taken a break in studies, or because they failed modules. If you are repeating part of your studies and are making an EC claim, it's important that you speak to your academic mentor or your course leader. It's important that you pass your assessments during your repeat study because students are not normally allowed to repeat their study for a second time. If your course team is aware of what you are experiencing, they can support you to complete your studies in time.

For more information on repeating studies, please see the Academic Regulations, "What if things don't go to plan?", and for information on registration periods, please see "What if I can't complete in time?"

What if I am studying on a professional course?

If you are unwell and studying on a professional course leading to registration, you may need to inform your Course Leader as this may mean that you cannot practise until you recover.

Please see your Course Handbook for guidance. Please also see the [Fitness to Practise Procedure](#)

What if I am studying on an apprenticeship course?

This procedure applies to all apprentices studying at the University. If you are unwell and studying on an apprenticeship course, it is important that you keep your employer informed. Apprenticeship students are required to be in work throughout their course and the University may need to inform your employer if you are not progressing through your apprenticeship as expected.

What if I am a member of the armed forces and am deployed?

Wherever possible we encourage you to continue and submit as normal. However, if this is not possible talk to us and we may be able to work with you on Exceptional Circumstances or taking a [break in studies](#) or another solution.
